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Chesham Urban District Council



REPORT

OF THE

MEDICAL OFFICER OF HEALTH

For the Year 1925.

THOMAS F. LONG, *Medical Officer of Health.*

To the Chairman and Members of the Chesham Urban District Council.

Gentlemen,

I have pleasure in presenting my 28th Annual Report on the health of your district, the time under consideration being the year 1925.

I would at once express my regret at the delay in bringing this to your notice and can only plead as extenuating circumstances that it has been caused by the inability to find time to write it.

Forms of Gratuitous Relief.

THE COTTAGE HOSPITAL.

During the year the debt on the new building was paid off and the institution is now free from debt.

This was accomplished with the aid of another very successful Hospital Fete in the Bury Grounds, kindly lent by Mr. and Mrs. W. F. Lowndes, at which £1,100 was cleared in the one afternoon.

The fact that something like £3,300 has been raised in this way in the last three years points very conclusively to the interest the inhabitants of your district take in their institution. In addition to the Fete a Carnival held in the town produced £172 6 4.

The institution consists of 23 beds, one small ward having been given up to the two honorary masseuses who are continuing their excellent work.

The Voluntary Workers' Committee are still carrying on their work and the amount handed over by them to the Hospital Committee has a tendency to increase

each year. From the Hospital Report I see that the sum provided in this way during the year ending June, 1925, amounted to the handsome sum of £562 12/-.

During the year 1925, Patients admitted are as follows:—

	M.	F.	C.
Ordinary Wards	... 46	46	13
Private Wards, 10.			

Cases treated by Masseuses, 63 ; Treatments, 649.

Number of deaths in Hospital, 8.

Number of operations, 29.

The average cost of each in-patient per week, £3 4 11.

This figure, I think, shows that there has been no stint exercised by the committee.

DISTRICT NURSING COMMITTEE :

I have received the following report from Nurse Peck, who is doing excellent work as district nurse and midwife :

The cases attended are as follows, with the number of visits given under each head.

	Cases attended	Visits paid.
General	... 76	1388
Midwifery	... 28	404
Maternity	... 13	145
Ante-Natal	... 125	
Infant Welfare	... 25	
Infant Health Visiting		949
School Medical Inspection		13
Casual Visits		15

CHESHAM INFANT WELFARE CENTRE.

I am glad to report that this Centre still continues to maintain its excellent standard of efficiency.

Only those who really visit the centre and come in contact with the working can realise the amount of good that is being done by the body of voluntary workers with Lady Just at their head.

The Hon. Secretary, Mrs. Chisholm, reports as follows :—

The Centre has been opened 44 times during this year, being closed for the month of August, and the attendance has been as follows :—

Number of mothers who attended during year	...	...	90
Number of Babies who attended during year	...	...	112
Total attendance mothers for year			1565
Total attendance of Babies for year			1836
Average attendance of mothers during year	...	...	37.5
Average attendance of Babies during year	...	...	41.7
Number of mothers on roll on January 1st, 1926	...	...	72
Number of Babies on roll on January 1st, 1926	...	...	83
Number of attendances of Doctor during year	...	...	22
Number of Children examined	...		155
Average number of babies seen by doctor at each attendance	...		7

I would at this point like to draw your attention to the fact that the infant mortality has dropped during the year from 41.3 to 33.3. There is still a tendency for nurse children to come into this district, and I am still of opinion that the rules and regulations as to these require strengthening.

DENTAL CLINIC.

This is still carried on in your district, and a lot of work is done, but I have been rather horrified when carrying out my duties as certifying surgeon under the Factory Act to find children who have only a few weeks ago left school, with mouths which are anything but a credit to the scheme as carried out.

I think this is rather a serious matter as it must be realised that when once a child has left school all authority has ceased, and it will be two years or more before they can come under the influence of the Health Insurance.

Many of the cases have been quite preventable by the aid of a tooth brush, properly used, but for some reason or other it seems very difficult to make children realise the necessity.

ST. JOHN AMBULANCE ASSOCIATION.

The Secretary reports that there are now 20 male and 14 female qualified

helpers on the books. During this year one male and two females have obtained their qualifying certificates.

During the year the number of cases dealt with and recorded is 128.

The Ambulance has travelled 3,231 miles and has taken 169 cases to hospitals or homes. Of these cases, 22 were road accidents, for which no charge is made. There is still a good deal of chatter going on in the district as to the amount charged for these journeys, and some have even gone so far as to suggest that the members of the local Company of St. John must be making a pretty fat thing out of it. This seems to me distinctly hard on a body of men and ladies who not only give their services, but pay for the privilege of becoming members, to say nothing of the time and energy they put in to qualify themselves for the work.

With regard to the Ambulance itself. Although the local brigade have it under their care the two accounts are kept absolutely distinct, and every penny that is charged for the use of the ambulance goes into the fund for its upkeep, with the exception that the driver is paid for time on the same rates as if he were at work and for long journeys my attendant he may have with him. This, I think, any reasonable individual, must consider fair.

Water Supply.

During the year no sample has been submitted to examination, but I have no reason to suspect but that all is satisfactory.

Rivers and Streams.

One has heard rumours of report on this, but the actual case has not come to my knowledge. I am very much afraid that with the abundance of Spring water still getting into the sewers that there is trouble ahead for us.

Drainage and Sewers.

In spite of the relaying of the sewers in Waterside, these are not satisfactory, but I believe you are contemplating dealing with the house connections in the water logged area, which should, I think, give a better result.

Water Closet Accommodation.

I have nothing further to report on this. From his monthly reports you are aware that your Sanitary Inspector keeps a very sharp eye on them and whatever he finds wrong at once moves to have it rectified.

One realises that all is not quite as it should be, but as I have before said, your officers can do nothing but patch until such time as more cottages are available, and most of the old property can either where possible be renovated, or where impossible closed.

Sewage Farm.

This is, I know, giving you as a Council and your Surveyor, a lot of trouble, owing to the amount of water that reaches there which cannot get away. I am aware that you have this matter in hand and can only hope that some solution of a very serious problem will be found.

Scavenging.

This seems to be carried on in a satisfactory manner, but I should still like to see a little more attention paid to the receptacles in which the house refuse is stored.

Sanitary Inspection of District.

Your Sanitary Inspector (Mr. H. Stacey) reports that the following inspection has been made during the year :—

1. GENERAL.

Dwelling houses only...	3120
Factories and Workshops ...	48
Slaughter Houses ...	967
Bake Houses ...	32
Cowsheds and Dairies ...	24
Common Lodging Houses ...	4
Premises disinfected ...	41
Infectious diseases ...	143
Fish Frying Shop ...	4
Total ...	4383

2. GENERAL HOUSE REPAIRS.

Roofs of dwelling houses repaired ...	17
Floors of dwelling houses repaired ...	5
Walls and Ceilings repaired ...	9
Walls and Ceilings cleaned ...	15
Eave guttering and fall pipes repaired ...	16
Choked Soil drains unstopped	88
Choked soil drains re-laid ...	13
New W.C.'s erected ...	3
Delapidated W.C.'s repaired	8
Dirty Sanitary Conveniences cleaned ...	7
Broken W.C. Pans replaced ...	3
Water fittings in W.C. repaired	90
Choked Surface Water Drain unstopped ...	5
Choked Surface Water drain relaid ...	5
Brick yards repaired or replaced	11
Accumulation of refuse removed	3
Keeping animals so as to be a nuisance ...	3

In reference to the quantity of dirty W.C. pans, Mr. Stacey would wish all to know that it is quite easy to clean these by using "Harpic," which should be used according to instructions on each tin.

Mr. Stacey also mentions for the benefit of any troubled with vermin in the dwell-

ings, that he finds, Pyrethrum Powder, which can be obtained from any chemist, most useful.

Premises in Occupation that can be controlled by Bye-Laws and Regulations.

1. SLAUGHTER HOUSES.

Number on Register ...	8
Number of visits paid to same	967

Your Sanitary Inspector reports that in one of these Slaughterhouses no killing or dressing of animal carcasses has taken place for over two years, and makes the suggestion that it should be removed from the register; the structure being quite inadequate and position most unsuitable. I would add my recommendation that such a course be taken.

It will be remembered that in my report of the year 1924 I raised the question of the advisability of providing a public Slaughter house. Mr. Stacey again refers to the matter in his report and says that "the eleven butchers share the remaining seven slaughter houses between them. The approach to and situation of six of them are quite unsuitable for such a trade. The butchers do their best to mitigate nuisances but with premises so unsuitable they are bound to arise."

I would again wish to draw your attention to these remarks, although I am aware that you know the condition quite as well as I do myself.

Number of Carcasses examined during the year :

Beasts ...	349
Sheep ...	711
Pigs ...	1120
Calves ...	109
Goats ...	9

During the twelve months the following meat has been surrendered :

Beef (in pounds) ...	2440
Mutton ...	698
Pork ...	668
Veal ...	148
Total ...	3954
Offals:	
Beef ...	595
Mutton ...	105
Pork ...	517
Veal ...	45
Total ...	1262

This gives a total of 5,216 lbs. of meat destroyed as unfit for human consumption during the twelve months.

Bake Houses.

Number on register ...	14
Number of visits paid ...	32
Notices served as to lime coating ...	7
Number reported by H.M. Inspector of Factories ...	2

Dairies and Cowsheds.

Number of Cowkeepers on register	...	...	9
Number of Dairies	...	...	7
Dairymen and Purveyors residing in district	...	...	13
Dairymen and Purveyors residing out of district	...	...	2
Number of samples taken for examination	...	...	20
Number up to required standard	...	...	19
*Number not up to standard			1
Number of visits made to premises	...	...	24

* On a second test, although poor in fat, it passed the standard.

Factories and Workshops.

Number of Factories on register (including 5 bakehouses)	...	70
Number of Workshops (including 7 Bakehouses)	...	61
Number of visits made	...	32
Number of Home Office Notices re Sanitary defects		2

Housing.

This, I consider, the most serious problem that you have to face as it is now becoming a question of not only crying out for a house, but crying out for rooms to live in.

I have now been your Medical Officer of Health for nearly 30 years and before I was elected to that office one of my predecessors drew attention to the fact that certain properties were then unfit for human habitation.

These houses still stand and are still inhabited at rents considerably higher than then paid.

The statement has been made and I believe it is true that certain cottages which years ago, when there was a chance of them being condemned as unfit, changed hands at £40 a piece, are now let at from 5/- to 7/- a week.

At the present time there are about 100 cottages which in the opinion of your officers are unfit and cannot be made fit for human habitation, and yet we have to go on year after year and let things exist which we know to be wrong, simply because our hands are tied on account of the shortage of houses and having nowhere to put the people.

In addition to those totally unfit there are certainly a like number, if not more, which require such repairs that they cannot be dealt with during occupation. These have to be left until such time as the situation can be dealt with.

One feels that one is not doing one's duty to the dwellers, but what can we do. It would be worse to turn them out in the street.

Your Sanitary Inspector in his report deals very strongly on this question and states the fact that overcrowding is in consequence very bad. I would draw your attention to his remarks on the situation.

"The provision of new houses is one of the most pressing needs of the district.

Under existing conditions no person can erect cottages and let them at an economic rent, and the few houses which have been erected have been chiefly for personal occupation by the owner, and every encouragement should be shown to such desirable citizens.

As a Council I know you do extend every facility you possibly can, but I feel sure there would be more persons of this class have houses erected if assessments were kept more on a basis comparable with similar houses erected in pre-war years. As everyone is aware the cost of erecting a cottage to-day in comparison with the cost in pre-war years is about three times greater.

I think everyone will agree that if any easement can be given in any way, the person who builds his own cottage under present conditions should receive that easement. My attention was drawn to this point by the assessment of new houses erected on the borders of your district, to give an instance, one of several, some of the houses erected during the year, down the Latimer-road, where there is no street lighting, public water supply, very little, if any scavenging, are assessed far higher than houses with similar, or more accommodation in the Broad-street, Eskdale-avenue, and White Hill Districts. Surely there is something wrong somewhere. As you see, the number of new houses erected is very small in comparison with present requirements. We need at least 200 to 250 new houses to meet our existing need, and we need them now. The overcrowding conditions are abominable and absolutely indecent, parents with mixed families of boys and girls, ranging up to 20 or more years in age, having to share two bedrooms.

There is only one solution to this vexed problem, the Council must build cottages, and when erected, parents who have large families and who are at present living in cottages with only two bedrooms should be given the preference to occupy them.

Repairs to Existing Cottages.

Here one is seriously handicapped. There are a number of four and five roomed cottages with badly broken floors. New joists and floors are required. They have

been patched until like a celebrated coat, they contain many pieces and are of many colours ; walls and ceilings require extensive repairs, and it is impossible to get this work carried out while they are occupied, even if the owner was willing to have the work done. The occupants cannot be turned on the street while such work is being carried out.

And what ought one to say concerning the old delapidated cottages, which ought to have been demolished years ago. Homes they cannot be truthfully called, some of them are absolutely dangerous from a structural standpoint, and if they are not demolished at an early date I am afraid they will suddenly collapse."

Number of new houses erected in district	...	...	...	11	
Number of Bungalows erected in district	...	...	...	4	
Number of houses nearing completion	...	...	...	4	
Number of houses closed	...	...	—

Method of Dealing with Infectious Disease.

No change has taken place in this during the year.

Notification.

During the year I have received 88 notifications of Infectious disease, made up as follows :—

Pulmonary Tuberculosis	...	...	6
Tuberculosis other than Pulmonary	...	...	7
Scarlet Fever	...	...	26
Diphtheria	...	...	—
Pneumonia	...	...	10
Typhoid and Paratyphoid	...	—	
Erysipelas	...	...	—
Ophthalmia Neoatotum	...	—	
Anthrax	...	...	—
Chicken Pox	...	...	39
Total	...	...	88

This is only one more than last year figures and is accounted for by the increase in the number of Tuberculosis other than pulmonary.

Tuberculosis.

I am sorry to notice the number of notifications of this disease has increased from 9 to 13. The increase is in those other than pulmonary, and I think in all probability is due to rather more careful notification, as of the 7 notifications 5 are those of tubercle of the glands of the neck.

The following table show the number of cases of the disease notified during the last 10 years and their average as compared with the figures of this year :—

	Pulmonary	Other than pulmonary	Total
1915	14	5	19
1916	9	9	16
1917	12	5	17
1918	9	3	12
1919	5	3	8
1920	3	3	6
1921	4	5	9
1922	8	2	10
1923	8	5	13
1924	7	2	9
—	—	—	—
	79	42	121
—	—	—	—

Average for 10 years	7.9	4.2	12.1
Figures for 1925	6	7	13

There have been six deaths from Tuberculosis in your district during the year, which is one less than in 1924.

Diphtheria.

I have received no notification of this disease during the year.

The following gives the notification for the last 10 years together with the average for 10 years for comparison with this year's figures.

1915	...	...	1
1916	...	...
1917	...	...	2
1918	...	...	4
1919	...	...	13
1920	...	...	7
1921	...	...	19
1922	...	...	4
1923	...	...	—
1924	...	...	2
			—
			52
Average for 10 years			5.2
Total for 1925	...	—	—

One swab of a suspected throat was sent to the Clinical Research for examination but proved negative.

I received no application for serum during the year.

Scarlet Fever.

I have received 26 notifications of this disease during the year, all have been nursed in their own homes, with the exception of one case which occurred in a home where the patient was residing in a house in which rooms had been let to another mother with a new born baby.

The figures give a case ratio of 2.92 per thousand.

Pneumonia.

I have received 10 notifications of this disease during the year and there have been

9 deaths in the district. This rather points to the fact that all cases are not notified. I do not however regard this as a serious matter.

Enteric Fever.

No cases of this disease have been notified during the year and no specimens of blood has been sent to the Clinical Research for examination.

Erysipelas.

No case has been notified.

Ophthalmia Neoatotum.

No case has been notified.

Anthrax.

No case has been notified.

Small Pox.

No case has been notified.

Chicken Pox.

I have received 39 notifications of this disease which is, curiously, exactly the same as 1924.

Population.

The population of your district is now estimated at 8882, which is two more than last year. I have not the remotest idea how these figures are arrived at, but comparing the births with the deaths it should have certainly been 20 more.

Death Rate.

The number of deaths registered during the year was 98. The death register for the last five years was as follows:—

1921, 107; 1922, 97; 1923, 89; 1924, 94; 1925, 98.

This gives a death rate of 11.03.

Birth Rate.

The number of births within the Urban Area during the year 1925 was 120.

These figures give a birth rate of 13.51.

In comparison I give the number of births and birth rates since the year 1919:

		Births	Rate.
1919	...	119	12.6
1920	...	227	26.3
1921	...	164	19.8
1922	...	155	17.7
1923	...	146	16.6
1924	...	145	16.3
1925	...	120	13.51

With these figures before me I do not consider that any instruction in birth control is necessary. There were three births of illegitimate children notified during the year.

Infant Mortality.

Of the deaths registered, four were those of children under one year of age, which even with the fewer births still brings our infant mortality down.

The following are the figures for the last four years with the rate:—

	Births	Deaths	Rate
1922	155	6	38.7
1923	146	6	41.09
1924	145	6	41.5
1925	120	4	33.3

One child only, under 2 years of age, has died from diarrhoea or enteritis, giving a death rate of .82. One child has died from whooping cough, giving a death rate of .11.

I would again thank your Sanitary Inspector (Mr. Stacey) for the way in which he has carried out his work. I note that you have shown your appreciation of him in a substantial manner and can only add that I am sure that he has earned every penny of it.

In conclusion, Mr. Chairman and gentlemen, I would again thank you for the assistance you have given me. Sometimes I think that it is time that I made room for somebody younger, but when things go so smoothly one likes one's duty and hangs on.

I am, Mr. Chairman and Gentlemen,

Your obedient servant,

THOMAS F. LONG,

M. O. II.